

**Natural Resources Commission  
Meeting Minutes  
February 8, 2018  
Lansing Community College – West Campus**

**Present for the Natural Resources Commission**

Vicki Pontz, chair  
J.R. Richardson, vice-chair  
John Walters  
Rex Schlaybaugh  
Louise Klarr  
Chris Tracy

**Present for DNR staff**

Daniel Bock, legal counsel, Office of the Attorney General  
Keith Creagh, director  
Bill O'Neill, natural resources deputy director  
Trevor VanDyke, legal/legislative director  
Brooke Parmalee, legislative assistant  
Cheryl Nelson, executive assistant to the NRC

**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

**Chair Vicki Pontz** called the Committee of the Whole meeting to order at 2:23 p.m.

**Parks and Trails Update** Parks and Recreation division's (PRD) **Jackie Blodgett** provided an update on what solutions the division is exploring for Porcupine Mountain Wilderness State Parks urgent road repairs. **Blodgett** also said that limited exploratory drilling has resumed at the Porkies for copper deposits below the park. These mineral rights are severed and not publicly-owned. Recognizing the legal right of the company that owns the deposits to explore its mineral rights, the department's permit for this work was written to minimize impacts on natural resources. **Blodgett** said that the Belle Isle Strategic Management Plan is nearing completion and will be presented in April to the Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee. New concession contracts for firewood vendors at state parks will encourage, but not require, the sale of kiln-dried wood. This change was made to reduce the transfer of invasive species via firewood movement. Snowmobile permit sales are up 11.3 percent this year compared to last. Lodging reservations are up two percent year-to-year, although the number of nights being reserved is down 2.3 percent. More reservations are being made for fewer nights. This change likely reflects customer response to new cancellation and modification fees that encourage customers not to make reservations they don't use.

**Office of the Great Lakes Update** **Director Jon Allan** reported regional relationships, **Governor Snyder's** press conference held the previous week on the new effort to protect the Great Lakes against invasive carp. **Allan** also talked about the work that the Office of the Great Lakes does with three important collaborative bodies; the Great Lakes Commission, the International Joint Commission and the Conference of Great Lakes and St. Lawrence

Governors and Premiers. These bodies recognize that managing the Great Lakes is a multi-state, bi-national responsibility.

**Budget Update Erik Eklund** from Finance and Operations division provided an overview of the Governor's budget recommendations for the department. Which included investments to protect wildlife and public health (\$2.6 million), ensure healthy and sustainable Great Lakes fish populations (\$277,500), protecting natural resources and Michigan's citizens (\$1.5 million), improve Mackinac State Historic Park experiences, (\$200,000), align spending authorization with available state restricted revenue (\$5.4 million), and improve snowmobile trail riding experiences (\$200,000). Capital outlay investments including state park infrastructure, recreational boating infrastructure, forest development infrastructure, waterfowl habitat total \$38,218,000. For the office of the Great Lakes, \$11.9 million total funds goes to Great Lakes restoration initiative (\$8.4 million), Coastal Zone Management Grants (\$1.25 million) and office of the Great Lakes (\$2.2 million). For improved licensed buying experience to modernize point-of-sale equipment and ensure data security which will reduce the failure rate of equipment and increase the number of terminals under warranty for an investment of \$400,000. Lastly, to renew Michigan's environment to invest in critical state park infrastructure maintenance, repairs and improvements, (\$5 million).

**Fisheries Strategic Plan** Fisheries division chief **Jim Dexter** presented the division's strategic plan. This plan focuses on five goals: (1) Ensuring healthy aquatic ecosystems and sustainable fisheries, (2) Promoting effective communication, outreach and education, (3) Improving and building strategic resource partnerships, (4) Developing strategically focused assessment and decision support tools, and (5) Fostering efficient division operations.

**Michigan Invasive Species Grant Awards Dr. Tammy Newcomb** Division reported on the latest round of Invasive Species Grants. This year's grants issued by the department, department of Environmental Quality and department of Agriculture and Rural Development funded 13 proposals for a total of \$3.6 million. The grants were directed at five focus areas: control of aquatic invasive species plants; detection and surveying of terrestrial invasive species; reduction of invasive species spread through firewood; prevention of invasive species introduction and spread through recreational activities; and other urgent needs. **Newcomb** reported that among other accomplishments, the state is making progress toward eradicating Phragmites in the Upper Peninsula.

**Chronic Wasting Disease Communications** Natural resources deputy director **Bill O'Neill** and marketing division chief **Phillips** shared the plans for weekly departmental meetings where the progress on assigned action items will be reviewed. This presentation was the first of five presentations to be made to the commission in an effort to combat CWD.

The day's presentation focused on communication; how to engage stakeholders and hunters not a member of any specific hunting group. Next up will be a series of public meetings across the state by the department's core CWD team, in an attempt to connect with hunters, starting with listening to their concerns.

The goal of the team is to provide five recommendations to the commission which will include:

\*the commission should pursue the help of an outside marketing agency for development of messaging Michigan's vision for CWD surveillance and management.



\*taking the lead to form a consortium of states and provinces to seek federal, state and private funding and share research on CWD surveillance methods, diagnostic tools, transmission pathways and management practices.

\*Work cooperatively with the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's commission to assess the effectiveness and direction of the farmed cervidae program, focusing on biosecurity and CWD risk factors.

\*Continue to employ science-based strategy for the regulatory framework of CWD management.

\*Develop statewide, science-based management plans based on regional prevalences of CWD.

**Legislative Report** **Anna Mooney**, legislative liaison for the department provided a written report of Michigan's recent legislative happenings.

#### **Committee Reports:**

**NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries:** **Commissioner Schlaybaugh** said that chief **Dexter** reported on the successful Black Lake Sturgeon season, which lasted seven hours. He also provided an update on Upper Peninsula fish stocking strategy. Wildlife division chief **Mason** talked about elk survey flights. Biologist **Barb Avers** provided an update on migratory game bird hunting stating that no significant changes will be made.

#### **PUBLIC APPEARANCES**

(**Brooke Parmalee** read the public appearances guidelines.)

**Paul Rose** commented on the Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Response Plan; the vehicular movement of deer and carcasses should be a priority as should communications. **Rose** added that he would like to see a deer baiting and feeding ban in the entire lower peninsula. This should not be delayed because of the proposal of a statewide proposal. The effect of CWD could cause lower land values. **Rose** provided a handout with additional information. He concluded by saying that the commission should support difficult decisions that will affect Michigan's future.

**Jim Sweeney**, Concerned Sportsmen of Michigan, shared his concerns regarding waiting on research findings on CWD, adding that the current timeframe will be detrimental. He provided the commission with a white paper with some further recommendations.

**George Lindquist** representing UP Whitetails of Marquette County provided the commission with the 2009 deer recommendations made by the workgroup in 2009. Stakeholders and hunters want a healthy deer herd. **Lindquist** offered the help of UP Whitetails in partnering on the CWD response plan.

**Dick Zook** concerning the CWD Response Plan talked about urgency, doe harvest and hunting community involvement and communications.

**Mark Jones** and **Mary Rosseel-Jones** talked about frogs being a game species are protected from use of artificial lights from 11:00 p.m. through 7:00 a.m. adding that he believes that amphibians, reptile populations also have this protection. **Jones** would also like to see bag limits reviewed and season dates shortened. **Mrs. Rosseel-Jones** added that they are against changing Sandhill cranes to a game species.

**Andrew Vermeesch** from Michigan Farm Bureau (MFB) talked about policies driven by a grass roots process and that MFB is committed to accomplish the goal on disease challenges. The group supports a state-wide ban on baiting. **Vermeesch** said that consideration needs to be given on the actual impacts and how to help farmers and bait retailers to better adapt. They would like to see this done as soon as possible. The MFB stands committed to being part of the solution.

**Ed Flanigan** would like to see knife or spear hunting made legal to hunt deer or any other wildlife that is allowed to be hunted. **Flanigan** said that finishing off a harvest with a spear or knife is currently technically illegal.

**Mike Zoli**, representing the Citizens Waterfowl Advisory Committee (CWAC) provided an update on the January 6, 2018 and added that the CWAC is in agreement with proposed migratory game bird hunting regulations.

**Pete Cornish** came before the commission to discuss property at the Cornish State Game Area, and the pheasant initiative. He would like to have phase II of the project provide more access to the land and asked the commission to consider continuing to allow the airport to be used.

**Amy Trotter**, deputy director, MUCC, said that MUCCC urgently asks that an order to ban baiting in the Lower Peninsula be done this spring. She added that there is a history of MUCC asking that baiting be banned, this is not new ground. A baiting ban needs to be done sooner than later.

**Tony Smith** spoke in support of the department's outreach efforts on the CWD issue. **Smith** asked the commission to keep an open mind on antler point restrictions. He is interested in the information that will be coming out of future meetings on CWD and how it will be utilized.

**Chair Pontz** adjourned the public appearances portion of the meeting at 4:48 p.m. She noted that all commissioners who were present at the Committee of the Whole are present for the regular meeting of the Natural Resources Commission, which began at 4:49 p.m.

## **REGULAR MEETING OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION**

### **I. FOR INFORMATION ONLY – NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION**

**Migratory Game Bird Hunting Seasons, Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 3 of 2018, FOR INFORMATION ONLY**

### **II. NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION ACTION**

**Approval of the January 11, 2018 Natural Resources Commission Meeting Minutes**

**Commissioner Tracy** made a motion that the minutes from the January 11, 2018 be approved. **Commissioner Walters** seconded. **Chair Pontz** asked for discussion, there being none, a vote was taken, and the item passed unanimously.



**Common Merganser Control Permits and Regulations, Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 1 of 2018**

**Commissioner Schlaybaugh** made a motion that Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No.1 of 2018, Common Merganser Control Permits and Regulations be approved.

**Commissioner Klarr** seconded the motion. **Pontz** asked for discussion, there being none, a vote was taken, and the amendment passed unanimously.

**Falconry Regulations, Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 2 of 2018**

**Commissioner Schlaybaugh** made a motion that Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 2 of 2018 be approved. **Commissioner Walters** seconded the motion. **Pontz** asked for discussion, there being none, a vote was taken, and the amendment passed unanimously.

**III. DIRECTOR – ACTION**

**Chair Pontz** asked the director if he planned to sign all items up for his approval. He indicated that he would be approving all presented.

**IV. COMMISSIONER REPORTS**

**Commissioner Schlaybaugh** shared that he had been in the southern states, but nice to get back to the snow. He also enjoyed spending time with new commissioner Walters.

**Commissioner Walters** thanked all the commissioners for their welcome adding that this is a special group with much work ahead of them.

**Commissioner Richardson** attended a UPSA meeting, a fisheries subcommittee meeting in Lake Gogebic, UP whitetails of Marquette county, he participated in a timber advisory committee call, which commissioner Walters also joined regarding sustainable harvest.

**Commissioner Klarr** attended a ruffed grouse fundraiser, along with a QDMA fundraiser in Harbor Springs.

**Director Creagh** will be heading to the UP 200.

**Chair Pontz** went to NWTF banquet in BR. Also had the opportunity to visited with **Senator Casperson**, in advance of a consent hearing for **Commissioner Walters**. She announced that sub-committee appointments have been made for 2018.

**NEXT MEETING**

**Pontz** announced that the next meeting of the Natural Resources Commission is scheduled for March 15, 2018 at the West Walker Sportsman's Club, 0-599 Leonard Street Northwest, Grand Rapids, 49534. Committees meeting on that day include the NRC Marketing, Partnership, Youth and Outreach Advisory Committee and the NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries.

**MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT**

February 8, 2018

**Commissioner Tracy** made a motion to adjourn the February 8, 2018 Natural Resources Commission Meeting. **Commissioner Klarr** seconded the motion and the meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

APPROVED: Date: March 15, 2018

  
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Vicki Pontz, NRC Chair

  
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Keith Creagh, DNR Director